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THE ANTI-JAPANESE PETITION.

A P P E A L

IN PROTEST AGAINST

A THREATENED PERSECUTION,

BY

K. T. TAKAHASHI,
A Japanese-Canadian.

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In democratic countries people are apt to think lightly of invoking the aid of their legislatures. But in reality this is at all times a most weighty affair, and should the invocation be in furtherance of some unjust scheme, nothing could be more condemnable than such an abuse. And it behooves all patriotic citizens to rise in solemn protest on such occasions.

In duty bound, then, I as a loyal citizen of Canada appeal to you who are our representative men for your undivided support to my representations, which I humbly submit hereinbelow.

Some interested persons have for some months past been soliciting signatures to what they term an "Anti-Japanese petition" addressed to the House of Commons of Canada in Parliament assembled. It prays, in substance, that a

new law be enacted to alter the present statutory provisions of Canada for naturalization as far as it concerns the Japanese immigrants, insinuating that the latter (the Japanese) have been in the habit of resorting to fraudulent practices in obtaining their naturalization papers.

Now, there are to-day in Canada, over four hundred men and women of Japanese race who are domiciled and naturalized, myself being one of them. If the Parliament legislate a new specific law on the strength of the statements of these petitioners, who style themselves "anti-Japanese," the meaning and result of such an Act will be to proclaim, under the great Seal of the State, that we, who are Canadians, are so only through a fraud, and that otherwise we are objectionable intruders.

I, on behalf of these four hundred threatened Japanese Canadians, and also on my own account, declare most emphatically that we are lawfully and legally the citizens of Canada, and that we shall consider any law which may be passed to vitiate this our sacred status, as both unjust, tyrannical and unconstitutional.

Furthermore, I solemnly protest that our great machinery of legislation must not be trifled with to abet conspiracy; and I appeal to you, in whose hands rests the good name of Canada, that, within her mighty dominion, no law be framed or tolerated which threatens to perpetuate an injustice and persecution upon a large number of her innocent and law-abiding people.

I may anticipate a retort that the petitioners are not conspirators, and do not mean any persecution. It must be remembered, however, that, to the intelligent public of Canada, the Anti-Japanese agitation has always appeared ill-advised and uncalled for; while the insincerity which is apparent in all their stated grievances, and the discrepancies which exist between their allegations and the actual facts, would clearly indicate that it is the petitioners' policy

to mislead the people and Parliament with a mere flourish of assertions and insinuations.

Being uncalled for, and not warranted by facts, and yet planning for a great wrong, it would appear that the petitioners' attitude cannot but be that of conspiring plotters and persecutors.

It may be asked, What reason is there to show that the law demanded by the petitioners is uncalled for? In reply, I submit that Japan has a very stringent law in operation, which provides that no subject of that empire shall leave its boundary without a written permit, in the form of a passport, the granting of which depends totally upon the character of the applicants.

Now, the Japanese are a very proud people, most intensely jealous of their national reputation, and they cannot bear the thought that their countrymen might become a cause of prejudice and discredit abroad. Again, as admitted by all those who know, Japan's police system and other administrative organizations of vigilance and inspection are the most perfect and efficient in the world. These two circumstances combined make the Japanese emigration law a most effective measure. An instance of this was when Hon. T. Nosse, Japanese Consul at Vancouver, memorialized his Government as to the undesirability of further granting passports to emigrants bound for British Columbia. This was in December of 1895, and in consequence there came from Japan not a single emigrant to that province all through the months of January, February, March and April of the following year. This stringency was subsequently relaxed owing to the local request. At all events, this shows that Japan is not only thoroughly in earnest, but entirely capable of preventing her people from becoming an objectionable addition and burden in foreign lands, and her action has always been prompt in this her most laudable effort.

To all fair minded Canadians, therefore, it can not but be plain that any special law to exclude the Japanese is not only entirely superfluous, but unjustifiable from an international point of view. For even less than a year ago, during the last session of the Parliament under the Conservative Government of Canada, many prominent members, including Sir Charles Tupper, the then Premier, and the Hon. Mr. Laurier, did not hesitate to denounce a foreign bill, known as the "Alien Bill," then pending in the Congress of the United States of America, as unjust and uncivilized. Precisely for the reason that we Canadians are civilized and enlightened, they then agreed not to entertain any retaliatory measures until it had been ascertained that the Washington Government would not be conciliated. Note, then, that Japan has to-day become a co-equal of the most civilized nations of Europe and America, by reason of their having conceded to her demands in ratifying the revised treaties of 1894. Hence Japan, as a power, should receive, and is entitled to, all the international courtesies as observed by the civilized nations of the world. Is it possible, then, that Canada, whose representative men had so recently declared even retaliation as unworthy of her national *rectitude*, though in presence of an open affront, would not only ignore a most exemplary disposition of a nation whose wishes have been respectfully heeded by all the great powers, but would themselves assume the offensive with not so much as an attempt at a friendly consultation? I characterize such a proceeding as a pusillanimous inconsistency, and repeat that such a law as demanded by the petitioners is both unnecessary and unjustifiable.

It is true, the petitioners make various statements in justification of their contention. I beg, therefore, to show how much truth and reason there are in their signed depositions.

Firstly, they say: "That, whereas the Japanese, on

account of the low standing of living to which they have been accustomed in their own country, are willing to take, and do accept, a much lower scale of wages than it is possible for Canadians to accept and maintain themselves and their families."

This is both misleading and false.

In Japan, her brooks and rivers, ponds and lakes, which are numerous and everywhere, and the seas which surround her islands, yield a great abundance of fish. Then the soil, which is generally rich and fertile, affords in a more prolific measure much larger variety of vegetables than in Canada. Being plentiful and easily obtainable, both fish and vegetables are exceedingly cheap there; but being fresh from Nature's stores, they are always wholesome and nutritious, and the Japanese—high and low—delight in them and live upon them.

The petitioners' evasive phrase, "the low standard of living," is, therefore, meaningless except as an insinuation suggested by the fact that in China they have a large, floating population that have no home, no citizenship, but live, simply live, from day to day, upon the dregs and refuse of the street, and are ever pining even for slavery abroad rather than continue their native life under the incessant pressure of hunger and inhumanity.

With these people, frugality verging upon starvation is inevitable, and low living becomes a habit. Japan, however, is not China, and is absolutely free from those execrable features so characteristic of the latter. Not only that, but even what is commonly known in the great cities of Europe and America as the "pauper class" is an unknown quantity and practically has never existed in Japan. In other words, even the lowest class of people in Japan have no opportunity to become habituated to what may be termed a "low standard of living." To say the

least, then, it is most misleading to speak of the Japanese standard of living as "low."

As for the allegation that the Japanese accept a much lower scale of wages, etc., it is unqualifiedly false. Accustomed to a life of plentiful and easy sustenance, direct from the hands of their own indulgent Nature, it is a common experience of all the Japanese who venture abroad that they cannot live as cheap as the natives of the place. This is especially true in a country like our Dominion, where the edible flora and fishes are comparatively limited and represent much expense, and the Japanese have to choose between paying more to satisfy their native tastes or adopt the mode of life of Canadian natives. In either case, it is therefore a physical impossibility for them to live in Canada and accept a scale of wages lower than that of the white workers. As a matter of fact, they do not.

I have carefully gathered and learned from most reliable sources the kind of pursuits that the Japanese generally take up in this country and the scale of wages they accept in so doing. These are boat-building, net-making, saw-mill hands, ranching, farming, colliery and salmon fishing; and the minimum wages they do accept in these trades and industries are not one whit below what are commonly accepted by the white people, and are much higher than those prevalent in the eastern provinces. Furthermore, I offer that if the petitioners would submit what they consider as an average scale of wages of the white workers, I shall also show that the same of the Japanese in Canada is not any way different therefrom. I may add that in Japan itself wages have risen 100 per cent., and even 200 per cent. in some cases, in consequence of great strides made there in matters commercial and industrial during the last five or six years. With the adoption of a gold standard, a measure which has lately passed both the houses of the Diet, there is every indica-

tion that economic notations in Japan and Canada will become practically the same in the immediate future.

In the light of all these circumstances it is plain that the petitioners' statements are both misleading and false.

Secondly they argue "that whereas as a result of their ability and their willingness to accept such a low scale of wages, the Japanese are already so seriously competing with white labour in the fisheries, mining, lumbering and other industries in this province, that they are to a large extent excluding white labourers from such industries, and there is every probability that in a few years, they, together with the Chinese, will entirely monopolize the opportunities for employment in the fisheries, market-gardening, canneries and other leading industries of British Columbia."

This is an illusion forced from the delusion I have refuted above. Japanese are not and will not be coming in in large hordes; nor have they displaced any white laborers in any industries of British Columbia. There is, therefore, absolutely no ground for pretending that the Japanese are going to monopolize the labor market, a point which I will make still clearer in my refutation that follows the next complaint of the petitioners which is: "That whereas the influx of Japanese is continuing on a large scale, and thereby the rate of wages, and the opportunities for employment available for Canadian workmen are generally lessened, the result has been to seriously prejudice the reputation of British Columbia as a desirable field for immigration from Eastern Canada and the United Kingdom."

This is again a gross misrepresentation of facts. There is in the first place no influx of Japanese into British Columbia continuing on a large scale. Some who land there, from time to time, via the Canadian Pacific vessels, are mostly transient passengers destined to different points in the United States, as may be verified by the official records of the health clearance papers, issued and kept by the

United States Emigration Commissioner in Vancouver ; and there is nothing singular in the Japanese preferring the Canadian to other routes because the former offers the best rate and accommodation. But the number of Japanese who come with the intention of staying and do actually stay in Canada, is now-a-days exceedingly small, as it has always been, and the petitioners' statement is in consequence a malicious exaggeration. Not less wanton is their attempt to pivot the cause of the reduction in wages in British Columbia onto the influx of Japanese. Whatever be the motive on the petitioners' part to forget, the fact is, that this result has been brought about by a multiple of causes quite independent of any Japanese element. As is well known, the province has become considerably developed during the last eight or ten years, and this meant economically an improvement in the means of communication and transportation, and the widening of the channel of commerce, which induced a more regular and increased flow of supply of the necessities of life, not to mention machinery, implements of agriculture, etc., than formerly. In consequence down went the prices of food and clothing and the rent. The cost of living reduced, the price of labor or the rate of wages could not help following suit. It is hence evidently absurd and even ludicrous to say that the Japanese had anything to do in all this, except, perhaps, in helping on the progress and development. Look, for instance, at the cannery industry on the Fraser. In place of 6 or 7 only ten years ago, there are to-day 36 establishments doing thriving business. I know full well a stock argument of the agitators is that the province of Ontario has attained its present flourishing condition without aid from a single Asiatic, implying that any given territory can be opened up without depending in the least upon Oriental immigrants. But the agitators forget that all new comers to a new country look for more or less of

hardships and privations, and would naturally select such district as is easy of access and otherwise free of natural obstacles, as much as possible. In a province like British Columbia, which has but 60,000 whites and 30,000 Indians against a vast area of 450,000 square miles, the presence of some eight or nine hundred Japanese scattered here and there can not possibly make any difference to settlers' minds. And I cannot help doubting the petitioners' seriousness when they feign that the Japanese have spoiled the opportunities of British Columbia to induce the Canadians of eastern townships and Britishers to immigrate.

Why, nine-tenths of the people of eastern Canada as well as of the British Islands and European Continent, know absolutely nothing of British Columbia; while with the remaining one-tenth the sentiment is entirely in favor of the Japanese. The real key to the situation is simply this : Ontario and Manitoba are on this side of the Rockies and offer all the inducements which *bona-fide* settlers of white race look for, and *they do not care to extend the journey to British Columbia at increased cost and trouble*; and Japanese have nothing to do whatever in this matter. I therefore conclude that the petitioners wild assertions are an imposition upon the credulity of the Parliament and Canadian public.

Finally they insinuate "That, whereas as the result of the extreme facility with which the Japanese immigrants can become naturalized as British subjects, there is great danger in consequence of the comparatively small adult male white population of the Province of British Columbia becoming Orientalized to a very great extent, which, with the ignorance of the Japanese of the English language and of British constitutional methods, involves a serious menace to the progress and institutions of the province, and to its peace and orderliness."

I protest that Japanese have no more advantage in the matter of naturalization in Canada than any other people ; nor do they enjoy any extra facility to become a British subject not granted to any other nationality, as darkly hinted by the petitioners. Again, Japan, of all countries in the world is constitutionally nearest to Great Britain, and her legislative and administrative methods are of the most advanced type ever adopted and experimented upon by mankind. This Japan has no outcast and no pauper class ; and her people in general are as appreciative of democratic principles as are average Canadians, and are law-abiding, industrious and progressive. It is therefore the height of malign imagination to say that the immigration of the Japanese people is derogatory to the constitutional prosperity of Canada.

In cities and towns like Vancouver, Victoria, Comox and Steveston, where Japanese congregate, they have long since established a church and missions, and an hospital and schools, and benefit associations, started and maintained exclusively by themselves without any outside assistance. English is the language taught and used as far as possible in the schools ; and Christianity, the religion, preached in the church and the missions. The hospital cost the Japanese fishermen in and about Steveston, more than \$2,500, which they have cheerfully subscribed. It has treated some two hundred patients since its opening and is proving to be a source of great blessing. The benefit associations aim at social fraternity and mutual assistance and nothing speaks more eloquently for them than the fact that there has not yet been a single Japanese in the whole Province of British Columbia who became a beneficiary of any charitable institution since their establishment.

If these things mean anything, they mean that Japanese are of a progressive and civilized race.

I have now shown paragraph by paragraph how utterly untenable are the contentions of the petitioners.

I shall desist from further prolonging my representation beyond remarking that the petitioners' true purpose can not be so much the shutting out of the Japanese as monopolizing to themselves the labor market of British Columbia, so that they may be in position to dictate their own terms to the employers, capitalists and political parties of that Province and Canada. I should not, however, omit to record here in justice to my fellow-Japanese Canadian that the real and most serious enemy to the bread-winners of British Columbia are to day as it had always been, those predatory aliens other than Japanese who freely cross and recross the boundary line and carry all their earnings away into the American side. When prospects are better and wages rise on our side they promptly come swarming in and at once make themselves the competitors of the sons and daughters of our soil. As promptly they depart when the tide changes, leaving our own workers poorer by what they take away with them. As aliens they have no right of fishing in Canadian waters, but when the season opens along the Fraser, I am told, they come and with remarkable despatch make themselves qualified Canadians. The same is said to be true in other industries of British Columbia. Yet singularly enough its labor agitators and the petitioners have nothing to say about these. One would conclude that the hidden but none-the-less real object of the present agitation and its prayers are to inveigle the Canadian Government into an intrigue to fatten European immigrants and settlers in Washington and other States of the American Union, under pretext of protecting Canadian workers !

Again by reason of the late war, I have studiously avoided all direct comparison between the Japanese and

Chinese, except in one place where the petitioners' aspersions made it inevitable. But justice demands now that I should further point out that the petitioners are themselves aware of and do recognize the vast differences that lie between the two nations. For, do they not have the anti-Japanese as well as anti-Chinese petitions, the two being wholly distinct and dissimilar in their respective wordings and prayers?

In spite of this forcible fact, however, in all their public utterances, the agitators who were the means of getting up the petitions and securing thereto the signatures, never had any complaints in particular to make against the Japanese, but their tactics have always been to speak of "Chinese and Japanese" in one breath and one phrase, as if the two were one and same people with identical traits and characters. It would hence appear the petitioners have calculated largely upon such anti-Japanese spirit as they might create and foster, knowing well, how generally some thoughtless people prejudge unfavorably of the Japanese because of some facial semblances they sometimes bear to the Chinese, while there has always existed a strong antagonistic feeling in all civilized countries against the latter people. It is then almost conclusively plain that the petitioners or the original agitators at least, have hardly any faith in their own anti-Japanese contentions, except that they depend upon this forced extension of anti-Chinese prejudices. I ask my respected fellow Canadians, in whom centre our national intelligence and integrity: "Should Canada be dragged into such irresponsible schemings of agitators?"

In the United States there are several thousand Japanese, located principally in the Western States on the Pacific. This means that to a square mile of land under cultivation or development, with its population and industries, there are more Japanese there than in our Canada. Yet,

who has ever heard of an anti-Japanese petition in the United States, though the Geary Chinese exclusion law is a common knowledge of the whole world? The in-coming of Japanese into California and other States began long before the cities of Vancouver and Victoria attained their present importance. In other words, the Americans have had longer and larger experiences with the Japanese, but they do not find, and have not found, any cause to object to the latter's immigration.

Why, then, do the agitators of British Columbia alone find fault with the Japanese?

My most respected fellow-citizens, I have now explained to you why such a law as demanded by the petitioners is uncalled-for and unjust, how untenable are the grounds of their contentions, and what is their suspected motive, together with their *modus operandi*. Above all and most strongly I have declared it that any recognition of the petitioners' petition will most seriously implicate the position of the four hundred Japanese Canadians, who are both loyal and law-abiding, and that a law such as the above will become a means of menace and persecution upon these innocent and law-abiding citizens.

I have also emphatically pointed out that an anti-Japanese law will be an act of undignified petulancy toward a friendly power—an act unworthy of British fairness and Canadian dignity.

In conclusion, I would remark that when the Honorable the Ministers Tarte, Davies and Blair were on their tour through British Columbia, in the early part of this year, there were presented to them many addresses and speeches by local representatives of various branches of industries; in all these, not a word was said in reference to Japanese.

From this significant fact coupled with another that Japanese are not cutting into the rates of white men's

wages, it must be inferred that there is really no complaint to make against them and that they are helping on as they have always been, in the opening up and industrial development of British Columbia.

Thus looked at from every point of view and considered under all circumstances, the Anti-Japanese agitation is unjust and any Anti-Japanese law will inaugurate a persecution.

Therefore, I appeal to you who are legislators, leaders and teachers of Canada and Canadians that you may take up our cause and extend us your sympathy and assistance.

I am, in humble petition,

Your fellow citizen,

K. T. TAKAHASHI.